



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Eagle Scout 2
Project

Idaho Gives 3

Wildlife Week- 4
end Programs

Friends of 5
MKNC

Belted 6
Kingfishers

Evening 7
Lecture

Winter 8
Potluck

Spring Wildlife 9
Event

Native Plant 10
Sale

Supporters and 11
Donors



The Nature Center Stream



Spring The Seasonal Newsletter of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game MK Nature Center **2018**



Kids love worms. It is true...out of all the programs we have done at the Nature Center where worms are mentioned, touched, gathered, or studied, there are very few kids who won't touch a worm. Worms are a great way to engage kids in learning about decomposers, ecological niche, plant growth, food chains, and the scientific method!

Since days have been warm and rainy lately, the worms are up and easy to find along the path, under the benches, and of course, in the Nature Center's compost pile. Recently, we have been finding worms mating, as all animals must to propagate a new generation. Worm reproduction is interesting as all worms are both male and female.

At the Nature Center, we have red wigglers in our compost pile and earthworms around the rest of the grounds. Both types of worms reproduce by finding a partner, lining up and attaching themselves together to "exchange information" and both worms can become fertilized. A yellow "cocoon," that resembles a very small lemon,



eventually slides off each worm, containing up to 20 thread-like baby worms.

The only worm native to Idaho is the Palouse Giant Earthworm. Both red wigglers and earthworms are introduced.

*Mating red wigglers found in MKNC compost pile.
Photo by Sara Focht, IDFG.*

MK Nature Center - Your Face-to-Fish Connection

Nature Center Notes

Vicky Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG



In a world where everyone seems to be yelling instead of listening and finding common ground seems impossible, it's hard not to wonder if we can agree on anything. The good news is that nature is a place where most of us agree. A recent social science study called *The Nature of Americans* by D.J. Case and Associates, found overwhelming agreement among Americans from all walks of life regarding the importance of nature for their physical and emotional health. Furthermore, a majority agree that learning about nature is important and that more programs should be offered to help Americans learn to enjoy nature, the outdoors and wildlife.

Nature centers large and small play a vital role in helping our fellow citizens enjoy the outdoors. Here at the MK Nature Center, we see this each and every day. Employees from various nearby businesses take daily strolls through the Nature Center, temporarily leaving their desks behind to relax and enjoy a breath of fresh air. Nature Center volunteers head outside, scattering throughout the grounds, happy to spend a few hours working outdoors. On weekends, families explore together, parents following in the wake of their exuberant children. Classes of students lend their enthusiastic chatter to their field trip explorations and observations.

The backdrop of the Nature Center with its wild inhabitants, plant and animal, draw our visitors and volunteers back time and again. This backdrop connects us to the landscape, to one another and helps us find those "good tidings" to which John Muir referred in his famous quote, "*Climb the mountains and get their good tidings.*" Whether it's a mountain, beach, forest, neighborhood green space or our Nature Center, nature, in all its forms, provides us with many good tidings that benefit our physical and emotional health. And that is something upon which most of us apparently agree. We look forward to seeing you at the MK Nature Center this spring!

Eagle Scout Project

Susan Ziebarth, IDFG MK Nature Center

Last October, Eagle Scout candidate **Carson Stoker** assembled a team for some bird viewing bench path repair, root removal, paver re-leveling, replanting suitable plants, and replacing rotting wood in the bench areas.

Along with managing a highly successful project, Carson conducted an equally successful fundraiser that bought the plants, provided lunch and drinks for his team, and the surplus \$160.00 went towards the purchase of lumber for the benches.

This was a successful and productive Eagle Scout! Thanks, Carson!



Carson buying plants from Diane Jones of Draggin' Wing Farm. Photo by Susan Ziebarth.

MK Nature Center - Your Face-to-Fish Connection

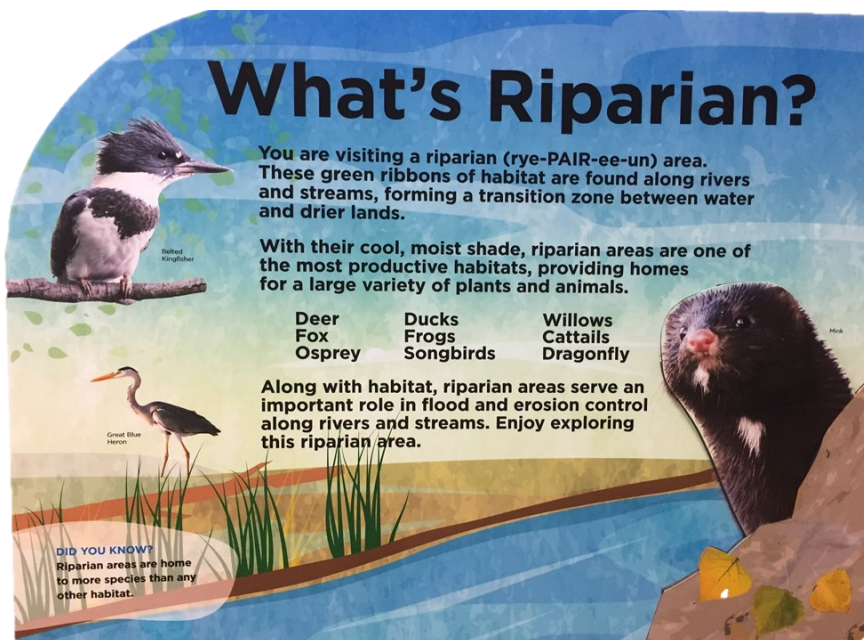
Idaho Gives

Joyce Harvey-Morgan, Board Member, Friends of MKNC

The Friends of MK Nature Center is participating again in Idaho Gives—Thursday, May 3, 2018. Our target projects are all about informal education—engaging the mind, emotions, passions and joy—whether the visitor is 3 or 93!

- Completion of comprehensive interpretive re-signage project—just wait until you see these awesome colorful and engaging new signs to be installed this summer!
- Addition of AmeriCorps member to supplement the education staff—to provide more tours, classes and informal weekend and evening learning opportunities for the community—this is a wonderful, cost-effective educational resource!
- Creation of pollinator display, highlighting a living bee hive and all the pollinators who are essential for our world.

We hope that you will help us make a difference for the MK Nature Center. Check out idahogives.com on May 3! Every donation—large or small—makes a difference! We'd love to have you on our team!



Take a sneak peek at one of the new interpretive signs made possible by Idaho Gives donations and grant funds. Image courtesy Stephanie Inman.

MK Nature Center - Your Face-to-Fish Connection

Wildlife Weekend Public Programs

Saturday, April 28th 10am-4 pm: Spring Wildlife Celebration

See page 5 for details.

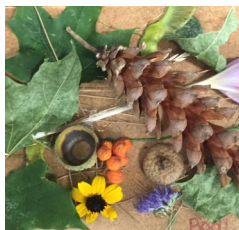
Saturday, May 19 10am-12pm: Nature Inspires Art

Come create your own journal using various techniques to learn about nature and create art. Take home a gytaku print, nature collage, butterfly, thumb print critters, leaf rubbings, and more! This class is designed for families with kids ages 3-15. The cost is \$2.50 per person, open to the public, first come, first served (capacity=60).

Saturday, June 16 10am-12pm: Scat and Tracks

Become a wildlife detective by identifying where animals have been traveling around at the Nature Center. Learn about different types of animal tracks and how to identify their scat and what it means about what that animal eats. Make and take home a wildlife track! This class is designed for families with kids ages 3-15. The cost is \$2.50 per person, open to the public, come, first served (capacity=60).

All programs are both inside and outside. Dress for the weather! All programs are at MK Nature Center 600 S. Walnut Street, Boise, ID 83712. Questions? email Tess at tess.wolfenson@idfg.idaho.gov



Rattle, Rattle, Rattle-Belted Kingfishers

Tess Wolfenson, AmeriCorps Member, MKNC



With spring approaching, you are probably hearing many bird calls! If you have heard a loud, rattling call, that is the belted kingfisher. Generally they are found nesting along the banks of stream, rivers, ponds, and estuaries. However, they are known to make long flights over various habitats, so do not be surprised to see them elsewhere. These native Idaho birds are quite the excavators, and make long tunnels along the riverbanks for nesting. They will make the tunnels uphill so that chicks can survive if there is any flooding. They are extremely sensitive to disturbance and if human activity becomes too frequent near their nesting or feeding areas, they will vacate those spots.

These solitary birds mostly feed on aquatic prey like fish and crayfish. They have a very distinct long, straight bill and are top heavy with their large heads. The migration for belted kingfishers is dependent on their ability to locate open water. If they are unable to find adequate open water here in the Treasure Valley, they will fly south until they find a place to fish. Male belted kingfishers have a stout, black bill and a single blue breast band. Females also have a more dagger-like bill that can be lighter in color on the underside of the bill. Females have a reddish brown coloring below the blue band as do all juveniles, both male and female. To see a belted kingfisher, walk along the Boise river and listen for the distinct rattle of its call. You almost always hear them before you see them!

*Above: Look for the belted kingfisher in the "Riparian Jewelbox" mosaic located along the Nature Center Streamwalk.
Photo above courtesy IDFG.*



Belted Kingfisher male. Photo by andymorffew (CC BY 2.0) on flickr.



Belted Kingfisher female. Photo by shellgame (CC BY 2.0) on flickr.

Did you know?

The Australian kookaburra is a member of the same bird family as the belted kingfisher: Alcedinidae.

MK Nature Center - Your Face-to-Fish Connection

The Evolution of Friends of MKNC

Tony Sandor, President, Friends of MK Nature Center



When I retired from the Morrison Knudsen Company in 2010 after 43 years roving the world, I was determined to do something besides corporate engineering and construction. Every day was a Saturday—for fishing, camping, working out, practicing a new song, walking. One of my walks brought me to the MKNC (which, in my corporate life, I had often visited, sometimes bringing along a potential client or colleague). I saw volunteers working on the walkways and digging weeds in the native plant garden. I noticed buildings with temporary fixes and bridges whose understructure was about as old as I, and decking in serious disrepair.

Without much thought of the consequences, I called the Nature Center and asked about becoming a volunteer. A little weed pulling every so often might be fun and maybe I could help with some of the other things that needed doing. Little did I know that Dave Cannamela had his line out, expertly placed the bait on target and soon landed a fish. It wasn't long before we were on the roof discussing the need to patch leaks; no wait, let's do the whole roof! What, no budget? Not to worry, we will ask for donations from past supporters. In a short time, the new roof was installed with help from the MK Foundation, a legacy of the old Morrison Knudsen Company.

Soon after, we established a non-profit charitable group, the Friends of MK Nature Center, that could raise money for needed enhancements and provide support for the many educational activities of the Nature Center.

During this time, I discovered more reasons to visit the Nature Center—grandkids! They thought that the Nature Center was part of Grandpa's back yard. Short walks became longer walks and exploration of the streamwalk. There's always something to see, and now they are leading the way, pointing out things. Of course, every visit must include looking for the big fish and posing at the owl holes. The kids are reading now and are anxiously awaiting the awesome new interpretive signs (the latest Friends' project) which will be installed in a few months.

I recently saw past colleagues from the old Corporation. They were thrilled to know that the Nature Center, which their company had helped to found, was thriving and that the Morrison Knudsen legacy (through donations from past employees and foundations) was thriving as well. Many had seen the beautiful new riparian zone mosaic (also funded by the Friends).

Meanwhile, the Friends of the MKNC is busily planning future projects and our upcoming participation in the annual Idaho Gives day of online charitable giving—May 3, 2018. We hope that you will help us make a difference for the MK Nature Center. Every donation—large or small—makes a difference!

We'd love to have you on our team!

Tony Sandor's grandkids Ryder Anderson (above) and Sierra Page (right) enjoying the nature center with Grandpa!



MK Nature Center - Your Face-to-Fish Connection

Last Evening Lecture Until Fall



May 7th-Idaho Fish & Game Botanist, Lynn Kinter will teach us about showy wildflowers and other native and non-native plants in the Boise Foothills.

Everyone is welcome, but lectures are designed for adults unless otherwise noted. Lectures are free and open to the public. All lectures are 6:30-8 pm. MK Nature Center 600 S. Walnut Street, Boise, ID 86712 (208) 334-2225

2018 Idaho Master Naturalist Class

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, IDFG



The 2018 class of the Sagebrush-steppe Chapter of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program started on February 27th, 2018. Chapter sponsors include the Idaho Department of Fish and Game MK Nature Center, the City of Boise, and the Idaho Botanical Gardens.

MK Nature Center - Your Face-to-Fish Connection

Volunteer and Supporter Potluck



MKNC appreciates our volunteers and supporters so much. Without them, we could not do what we do!

SPRING WILDLIFE CELEBRATION

at the
MK Nature Center

600 S. Walnut, Boise

Saturday, April 28
10am - 4pm

\$3 per person (ages 3 and over)



Family Friendly Event ***

- ☀ Live Bird Presentations
- ☀ Wildlife Themed Education Tables
- ☀ Activities and Games
- ☀ Hunting Dog Demonstrations



Questions? Contact Sue Dudley
sue.dudley@idfg.idaho.gov
208-287-2900



MK Nature Center - Your Face-to-Fish Connection



2018 Idaho Native Plant Sale

Saturday, April 28, 10am-1pm

at the MK Nature Center, 600 S. Walnut, Boise

Sponsored by the Idaho Native Plant Society Pahove Chapter & the IDFG MK Nature Center



Look on the INPS website under "Pahove Chapter" tab for detailed availability list by mid-April:

www.idahonativeplants.org

**we can only accept cash and checks*

Nursery license #00T0016

Donors and Volunteers

Supporters listed here donated directly to the MK Nature Center between January 1 and March 31, 2018. Donations come in the form of money, goods, services, or other in-kind donations. Donors to Friends of MKNC are not listed here.

Hilda Packard
John & Edwina Allen
Merwin & Dorothy Bauerle

Odos Lowery
Polly Montgomery
Robert Stearns

Scott & Susan Prestel
Wild Birds Unlimited

The following people volunteered their time to the MK Nature Center between January 1 and March 31, 2017. Thank you!

Arleen Schaeffer
Bronwyn Myers
Seth Davis
Ariel Varland
Nancy Dewitt
Patti Gregor

Barb Recla
Suzanne Troje
Madonna Lengerich
Carolyn Larson
Janna Gray
Anna Zhikhareva

Pam Bly
Leah Brown
Colton Hairston
Ryan Reifschneider
Kylee Erwin
Robbin Prokop

Curtis-Lake Cloudt
Erica Koppes
Sue Moeller

BSU Work Study Student Highlighted

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, IDFG



Michaela does not hold snakes and raptors all day. She and other work study students perform a wide variety of tasks that keep the Nature Center running smoothly. Photos courtesy Boise State University.



MK Nature Center's work study student Michaela Johnson was chosen by Boise State University (BSU) to highlight and advertise the work study program. Photographers from BSU came to MK Nature Center to capture Michaela during her workday. The BSU work study program partners with MK Nature Center to provide part time work for students.

This Federal Program is a type of financial aid that benefits the student by paying them to gain valuable work experience. The MK Nature Center has partnered with BSU's work study program for nearly 15 years. The Nature Center pays only half of the student's hourly wage...a feature that has enabled the Nature Center to get much needed help for a very reasonable cost. We value all our work study students and BSU for this opportunity!

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